Chapter 8. Ten Lessons Learned

Reviewing TOD projects and the important lessons they teach:

"Since the late 1980s, TOD has evolved from a planning theory to implementation. There are now numerous 'built' TODs to study and learn from. Drawing on interviews with planners, developers, local officials and the TOD profiles completed in the 'Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California', it is possible to offer some key lessons that will be useful for practitioners."

Terry Parker and GB Arrington, "Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California", for the California Department of Transportation, Final Report, April 2002

Key Lessons

1. TOD can be a catalyst for achieving broader planning objectives:

   {[1] "TOD is most likely to be successful when it is implemented as part of a community's vision for future growth. As part of a larger vision, TOD can be used as a tool to achieve broader community goals for growing smart, while at the same time reinforcing the community's investment in transit." [1]}

2. Community partnerships are essential:

   {[2] "TOD requires coordination between local land use agencies and transit districts to plan and implement transit improvements and land use development. TOD is most successful when project leadership is shared with the community, local jurisdictions, developers, financial institutions, and transit agencies. Local governments can assume a primary role in promoting TOD by developing plans, policies, zoning provisions, and incentives for supportive densities, designs, and mix of land uses." [2]}

3. Design for the pedestrian:

   {[3] "To function properly, the TOD site plan, transit facilities, and connections to the surrounding community need to be designed with the pedestrian in mind.

   a. Easy access to the transit stop: Easy and convenient pedestrian access to the transit stop is of critical importance in any TOD design. Clearly defined, comfortable, highly visible, and safe walking and bicycle routes should lead to the transit stop with a minimum number of street and intersection crossings.

   b. Walkable TOD site design: TODs should be designed so that the people living, working, or shopping in the neighborhood will find it convenient to walk or bike to neighborhood parks, shopping opportunities, and employment centers.

   c. Connections to the community: New TOD projects should include multi-modal and contextual connectivity by having circulation patterns that capitalize on existing street, pedestrian, park, and open space networks. TODs work best when they are integrated into the surrounding community rather than standing apart from them." [3]}

Note: Because of the volume and length of many of the quotations in this document, a bracket symbol with corresponding footnote reference number is placed at the beginning and ending of each quotation.

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4. Start TOD work early:

   {[4] "Communities interested in promoting TOD need to consider TOD in the design and location of transit facilities. …Often, transit systems are designed without considering TOD's potential. Transit stops are located in areas with little or no development potential and transit facilities are dominated by commuter parking. With careful consideration, transit can be designed both to accommodate TOD and fulfill basic transit functions." [4]}

5. Parking is one of the most important land uses in a TOD:

   {[5] "How to design parking lots and how much parking to provide are perhaps the most critical land use decisions that need to be made when planning for a compact, walkable TOD. The challenge is to provide for the automobile without being dominated by it. Parking needs to be analyzed at two levels: where it should be on the site and to what extent the number of parking spaces should be reduced." [5]}

6. Plan for a mix of uses:

   {[6] "Promoting compact development and reducing automobile use can best be achieved through a mix of land uses. TODs can offer places to shop, work, live and recreate. Mixing uses in TODs offers additional opportunities to reduce parking requirements and increase transit use." [6]}

7. TOD requires experienced leadership:

   {[7] "Successful TOD teams…include people with significant experience in real estate development and transit planning. Successful TOD implementation typically involves a number of elements, such as optimal transit system design; community partnerships; understanding local real estate markets; planning for TOD; coordination among local, regional, and state organizations; and providing the right mixes of planning and financial incentives." [7]}

8. Density…matter[s] in TOD performance:

   {[8] "Increasing the density in areas around a transit station can lead to a corresponding increase in transit ridership. …[Increasing density reduces the need for a car.] Transit use rates begin to increase at an average overall density of around six to seven households per residential acre, as vehicle trips decline. At around 50 households per acre, the number of trips taken daily by vehicles, transit, and walking become about the same. Increased densities have also been found to correspond with decreased levels of auto ownership." [8]}

9. Most TOD occurs after new transit service is established:

   {[9] "Patience may be necessary when working with the development community. TODs are rarely built to coincide with the opening of new transit facilities. Instead, some developers and local planners tend to wait to see how new transit service is accepted by the community before investing in adjacent real estate. Once an initial track record of TOD is established, the pace of implementation tends to accelerate. Taking the long-term view and protecting the opportunity for TOD by not allowing non transit-supportive development to occur around transit facilities is critical. An effective strategy to overcome skepticism about the market for TOD is to require projects to be pedestrian-friendly. If the project works for pedestrians today, it will work for transit tomorrow." [9]}

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10. Demonstration projects can accelerate TOD implementation:

    {[10] "For many communities, a critical step to more widespread TOD implementation is the development of successful demonstration projects. Even though market forces and public policy have become increasingly 'TOD-friendly', concerted action is needed to spur the creation of new development models in some communities. TOD demonstration projects can provide real estate developers with the appraisal 'comparables', market performance information, and physical evidence they need to justify experimenting with new development models." [10]}

References

1 Terry Parker and GB Arrington, *Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California*, for the California Department of Transportation, Final Report, April 2002.

2 Parsons Brinckerhoff, prepared by GB Arrington for this Compendium.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.